The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20010823133014/http://www.communitypresbyterian.com:80/52800.htm

Sunday Brunch with Jesus

John 21:1-14

Thomas Michael Smith
CPC 5/28/00

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

This morning I'd like to talk about our community, that is, our CPC community. I believe having a sense of community is important, and I believe that a good community is one in which people help one another. When I look out among you, those of you who are here this morning and the 'you' who are not here this morning but are often here and so included in my view as I look here and there, what I see is a people with a huge number of talents and experiences and joys and sorrows. Perhaps that's the very most special thing about being a pastor - to be able to see the big picture, and perhaps, to be able to have the imagination to see everyone working together as a functional community.

We are a community with a special purpose. Though some of us belong to *service* clubs, our community is not a service club. Though some of us belong to *social* clubs, our community is not a social club. Though some of us belong to any number of special interest groups in our area, we are not unified around any one special interest. We are the community of the king, Jesus the Christ, and we are a people of a Book, the Bible, and so we don't get to make up the rules as we go. They have been handed down, given to us, from one century to the next, from one faithful generation to our generation, which also struggles to maintain the all-important covenant with God.

I've noticed recently how our community has grown. To be sure, we have grown in members, in attendees on Sunday morning and during the week. But we have grown in other ways as well, in maturity and in wisdom. As a community of the king, we are less reactive to every hurt, less frightened by every conflict, less traumatized by every grief. We continue to hurt with those who hurt, and want to walk alongside those in conflict, and grieve with those who grieve. But we are learning how to fix the problem and not fix blame, and slowly, but surely, we are gaining confidence in the use of our talents and the application of our experiences, and even in the use of the spiritual gifts given us by the Holy Spirit.

Still, despite teaching *on how to be* when this or that might happen, most of us find ourselves in situations where we sort of remember how we should act, or what we should do, but (as normal human beings) we somehow forget the teaching we have received, and slug along in the mud of the situation God places before us. And that's OK too. Because it's in the nitty-gritty working out of our *stuff*, that God changes us.

So, some of us find ourselves right now slugging through thick mud, and others of us find ourselves in a period of rest, ready to be refreshed by the Spirit, so that when the next right time comes, the next right time of God's own love-filled choosing, we will be ready for more hard work, more thick mud.

The Gospel story this morning is one such time of refreshing, one such time of rest. It's not to be confused with permanent reality, or even with a vacation, as much as it is a God-time of rest, a time in between the next time when our Lord will set us

to move through some more thick mud, for our own benefit, and often for the benefit of others.

How many of you are morning people? Do you savor the early morning, the sunshine in the garden, the first cup of hot coffee or tea, the birds singing, and air, fresh and cool and clean. Morning, for me, always hints of new hope and a sweet innocence.

I feel that same sweet sweetness and innocence in this passage from John 21. Throughout the dark night, the normal time of fishing on the Sea of Galilee because at night the daytime winds subside, and the fish move to the surface, the disciples had cast their nets out into the sea, silver in the moonlight. By morning they were tired, and they had caught nothing. Through the slapping waves on their boat, and the gray mist of dawn, and their sleepy stupor, they heard a voice from the beach call to them, "Children, have you caught any fish?" They growl back, 'No."

They hear that voice again from the beach: "Try the other side." And they do, for some reason, and you see the beautiful net poised in the air, landing with all the weights in a perfect circle as it falls through the silver waters, and as they pull it back, you see it full with sparkling, jumping fish! In that moment, the glistening, shimmering, leaping fish of all colors in the net is like a rainbow, a gorgeous patchwork of every color, all alive together in the golden morning sun. And then, you see one of them look at the bulging net, and then look to the shore to the voice who told them to try once more, and he yells, "It is the Lord!"

And then Peter, perhaps my greatest New Testament hero because he never quite gets it right, decides to *put on his clothes and then jump into the waist high water*, and swims/walks/lunges/splashes towards Jesus on the shore, with buoyant laughter and joy in his heart.

And there, when the others bring the fish-laden boat to the shore, is Jesus in flesh and blood, calm, loving, strong, with his little charcoal fire, cooking fish and bread for their breakfast. These disciples, these who have been through so much together, who have such incredible memories, just sit there and eat, smelling the charcoal, the cooking fish, the fresh bread, and feel the cool breeze, and the birds as they extend greetings in the early morning sun.

The long night is over, and they are all safe and warm and alive with Jesus again. It is like the beginning when he fed bread and fish to 5,000 by this same shore, near this very spot. They remember. It is like the first time He called to them, or the time He calmed a storm here. They remember. And it's not unlike that last supper they shared. They remember that too. They wiggle their toes in the sand, poke at the fire with a stick, exchange shy looks with one another, and broad smiles, and they jostle and joke gently, sweetly, like boys again. He was gone but now He is here. He was dead but now He is alive. They rest, they eat, they play. They sigh with peace.

They know they will soon be out again, doing the ministry of Jesus, building the church, showing new people how to be a caring community, living with the power of the Holy Spirit. They know there will be much to do, and suffering, and personal growth, and thick mud. But now they share their company in peace, in joy, in rest, with their Lord, their Friend, their Mentor, and each other. A community.

The 153 fish caught in the net probably represent all of the known fish in the Sea of Galilee, and by extension represent the church, full of different colors of people and different varieties of background and class and education. The church, like the

net, so full you would think it would break, but we all, lifted up, brought to the shore, brought to Jesus, a net that did not break, does not break.

And the breakfast probably represents a eucharistic meal, a holy communion, in which we take part with our Lord and Savior, and with the others in our community, some who have worked through thick mud before, most who have thick mud in their future, as we do too.

This summer is an important time at CPC. We all know people who think the best way to spend Sunday morning is to eat a good breakfast and get out to chores. Or others who plan to sit home and linger over pancakes and coffee and read the paper and then go to Berryessa to fish or water ski. We have to show them that we have something worth any or all of that, that if they join us here it will be a better breakfast, followed by a better activity, than they had planned. We have to engage their minds and their hearts with the fragrance of grilled fish and fresh bread and with the deeper purpose and meaning of the Spirit who nourishes us with hope and love. For these other people *are* looking for life, and Jesus *is* here, offering not only life, *but life abundant.*

So, be at peace with the Lord, and with one another. Remember that slogging through thick mud is part of our growth and part of our ministry to each other, and to those others, but that Jesus also provides us times of rest and nourishment and peace. Go ahead, wiggle your toes in the sand, poke the fire, and smile at one another, for this is the place where Sunday brunch with Jesus is served.

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

Copyright © 2000 Community Presbyterian Church, Vacaville, All rights reserved.

Castles INFORMATION NETWORK